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ON PAGE 4A

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Inman quit over study, sources say

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WASHINGTON — CIA Deputy Director Bobby R. Inman submitted his resignation during a heated internal debate over a secret counterintelligence study, but since then, he and other intelligence officials have succeeded in narrowing the study's scope, sources say.

The sources' account of the dispute supported those who have said the study was a factor — but not the major factor — in his departure. Inman's resignation was announced Wednesday, a month after he submitted it to the White House.

Three government sources, all of whom have access to information about the counterintelligence project, said Thursday that an agenda for the study was approved Wednesday by an interagency working group chaired by John Kohler, chief of the intelligence community staff.

Not listed on the agenda were two topics that Inman, CIA Director William J. Casey and FBI Director William H. Webster had feared might be included in the study: the organization of U.S. counterintelligence agencies and such esoteric topics as deceptive Soviet missile telemetry, the sources said.

Inman and the others felt that deceptive telemetry was really outside the scope of a counterintelligence study and that organizational questions had been resolved satisfactorily last year.

Inman's resignation letter was dated March 22, which the sources said was near the height of internal disputes over the study.

Some conservative members of the National Security Council staff and the Senate Intelligence Committee originally conceived of the study. For some time, these conservatives have said Inman was frustrating some of their goals, and at least one has applauded his resignation.

Some sources have said that the



Bobby R. Inman
Argued with conservatives

dispute over the study may have been one factor in Inman's decision. But those closest to Inman, 51, said that was minor compared to other reasons such as his desire to go into lucrative private work.

Inman told the New York Times that his departure primarily was the result of a long-standing desire to leave government but also was prompted by other concerns, including "steadily diminishing tolerance for petty bureaucratic intrigue."

The conservatives who pushed the study have called for centralized counterintelligence files and a counterintelligence chief outside existing agencies with power to assign the CIA and the FBI various tasks. Some of them have said Inman had done too little in his previous post as head of the National Security Agency to penetrate deceptive Soviet missile telemetry.

But one top-level government source called such far-reaching ideas "really off the wall," with a "right-wing approach" that threatened to jeopardize effective, hard-won working relationships between the CIA and FBI on counterintelligence.

The sources said that President Reagan approved the study on Feb. 15 in a generally worded order that did mention counterintelligence organization.

They said that Inman drafted an implementing proposal that focused heavily on the need for additional counterintelligence resources.

Inman's proposal was rejected in blunt language by the President's national security adviser, William P. Clark, the sources said. One said that Clark was critical of his proposal for focusing on resources without dealing with more fundamental questions.

The sources said the FBI then drafted an implementing proposal and that in the words of one source "the arguments reach a peak in mid-March over this and generated a lot of conflict and heat."

In any case, the sources said that the outcome of the discussions was a study focused on counterintelligence threats, capabilities, and resources that satisfied CIA and FBI officials and was close to what Inman himself had been seeking. The agenda approved Wednesday does not specifically mention counterintelligence organization, the sources said.

In another development, Sen. Richard Lugar (R., Ind.), one of Reagan's

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